

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTO 03329 162257Z

ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5015

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PANAMA NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 3329

PANAMA FOR PASTOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PEPR , PINS, DR

SUBJECT: ELECTORAL SITUATION

1. TODAY ALL EYES WERE FOCUSED ON THE OPENING OF THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (JCE) HEARINGS ON REFORMISTA PARTY CHALLENGES TO THE MAY 16 ELECTIONS. JCE MET TO REVIEW APPEALS TO CHALLENGES WHICH WERE REJECTED BY MUNICIPAL ELECTORAL BOARDS. WHILE JCE STARTED OUT WITH TEN CASES, REPORTEDLY THERE HAVE BEEN TWENTY-TWO SUCH CHALLENGES REJECTED AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL. OUT OF A TOTAL OF 84 MUNICIPAL BOARDS, RESULTS WERE REPORTEDLY CHALLENGED IN 44 OF THESE; HOWEVER, TWENTY-TWO OF THESE BOARDS SIMPLY PASSED THE CASES ON TO THE JCE FOR A RULING.

2. HEARINGS TODAY WHICH WERE ATTENDED BY EMBOFF, TOOK ON SOMETHING OF THE CHARACTER OF A "GREAT DEBATE." IN CROWDED JCE HEARING ROOM BOTH THE REFORMISTA PARTY AND THE PRD LEADERSHIP WERE OUT IN FORCE. BUT THE TWO PRINCIPAL FIGURES WERE THE REFORMISTA PARTY'S "LEGAL ADVISOR" MARINO VINICIO (VINCHO) CASTILLO AND PRD PARTY PRESIDENT

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SANTO 03329 162257Z

AND RESPECTED LAWYER SALVADOR JORGE BLANCO. JCE INTERIM CHAIRMAN HUGO VARGAS SUBVERNI JUDICIOUSLY OVERSAW PROCEDURES, AND THE MOOD, THOUGH TENSE, WAS PROPER. HEARINGS STARTED OFF BY READING OF DOCUMENTS CONCERNING INDIVIDUAL MUNICIPAL BOARD FINDINGS, BUT JCE ACCEPTED A REFORMISTA MOTION TO HEAR THE APPEALS TOGETHER AND HEARINGS QUICKLY MOVED TO GENERALIZED ARGUMENTATION BY CASTILLO AND

JORGE.

3. REFORMISTAS WERE CLEARLY ON THE OFFENSIVE. VINCHO LAID OUT IN SOME DETAIL REFORMISTA LEGAL CASE. HE CLAIMED THAT IN THE MAY 16 ELECTION "GRAVE ANOMOLIES" CAUSED A HIGH LEVEL OF VOTER ABSTENTION AND CALLED FOR A CAREFUL SCRUTINY BY JCE OF THE VOTER REGISTRATION LISTS USED IN THE ELECTIONS THIS YEAR AND IN 1974 (SUPPOSEDLY ON ASSUMPTION THAT THE 1974 LISTS WERE USED AS BASIS FOR ALLEGED MANIPULATION OF THE 1978 LISTS). FINALLY HE CALLED FOR "COMPLEMENTARY ELECTIONS" AND (IN SOMETHING OF A NEW TWIST) IF "COMPLEMENTARY ELECTIONS" WERE RULED NOT POSSIBLE UNDER THE LAW, FOR ANNULMENT OF THE MAY 16 ELECTIONS AND THE CALLING OF NEW GENERAL ELECTIONS.

4. JORGE BLANCO REBUTTED, ASKING JCE TO REJECT THE REFORMISTA APPEALS. HE ALSO ARGUED STRONGLY AGAINST THE "COMPLEMENTARY ELECTIONS" AND SAID IDEA WAS BASED ON THE EXISTENCE OF A "FALSE" OFFICIAL GAZETTE (SEE SANTO DOMINGO 3171).

5. REPRESENTATIVES OF SUNDRY MINI-PARTIES ALSO GOT INTO THE ACT IN SUPPORT OF THE PRD OR THE REFORMISTAS.

6. BY ABOUT 3 O'CLOCK THE HEARINGS WERE ADJOURNED TO BE REOPENED ON MONDAY.

7. DURING COURSE OF DAY PRESIDENT-ELECT ANTONIO GUZMAN
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PAGE 03 SANTO 03329 162257Z

WENT ABOUT BUSINESS AS USUAL BY PAYING A CALL ON FOREIGN SECRETARY JIMENEZ. ONE PURPOSE OF CALL WAS TO BEGIN ARRANGEMENTS FOR GUZMAN'S INAUGURAL CEREMONY. AFTER MEETING WITH JIMENEZ, GUZMAN COMMENTED ON CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION, SAYING THAT IT WAS CAUSING DAMAGE TO THE ECONOMY AND IMPORTANT BUSINESS SECTORS WERE HOPING PRESIDENT BALAGUER WOULD SPEAK TO THE COUNTRY TO CLARIFY THE CURRENT PROBLEMS.

8. ANOTHER BIT OF ELECTORAL NEWS THIS AFTERNOON WAS THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PRESENCE IN THE COUNTRY OF TWO CHILEAN COMPUTER EXPERTS, REPORTEDLY CONTRACTED BY THE JCE TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES IN THE COMPUTERIZED VOTER LISTS USED FOR THE MAY 16 ELECTIONS.

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THIS WAS A DAY IN WHICH MANY THOUGHT "SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN" TO DEFINE ELECTORAL SITUATION, PROSPECTS NOW ARE FOR A MORE DRAWN-OUT PROCESS. HOWEVER, FACT THAT AT LEAST JCE IS PROCEEDING TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE ELECTORAL SUSPENSE BY HEARING THE TWO SIDES OF THE LEGAL ARGUMENTS OVER THE MAY 16 ELECTORAL RESULTS MAY HELP DAMPEN DOWN THE TENSION THAT HAS BEEN BUILDING UP. CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IS FOCUSED ON THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN

TWO OF THE COUNTRY'S BEST LAWYERS, CASTILLO AND JORGE,
THE TWO MEN WHO MANY BELIEVE MAY FACE EACH OTHER AS
PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDERS OF THEIR PARTIES IN 1982.
YOST

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